



UNITED STATES SENATE
**REPUBLICAN
POLICY COMMITTEE**

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Trade Center Blast of Nuclear Proportions

Terrorists on Fast Learning Curve To Ever More Lethal Bombs

Terrorists are using bombs that are ever more lethal – and there is abundant evidence that they are in pursuit of devices and methods that will be infinitely more powerful and deadly. The State Department’s review of global terrorism (released in April of this year) says,

“At the dawn of the new millennium, the possibility of a terrorist attack involving weapons of mass destruction — chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear (CBRN), or large explosive weapons — remained real. . . . Most terrorists continued to rely on conventional tactics, such as bombing, shooting, and kidnapping, but some terrorists — such as Usama Bin Ladin and his associates — continued to seek CBRN capabilities.”

The two attacks on the World Trade Center show most starkly the extravagant leap that terrorists have made in acquiring new and more deadly weapons:

The World Trade Center (WTC) first came under terrorist attack on February 26, 1993, when a terrorist drove a rented van filled with explosives into the parking garage beneath the buildings. When the bomb was detonated, six persons were killed and more than 1,000 were injured (mostly from smoke inhalation), but the building did not collapse (as the terrorists had hoped). The 1993 bomb had the explosive power of about *one ton of TNT*.

On September 11 of this year, the World Trade Center was attacked again. Two commercial airliners were used to destroy both WTC towers and cause perhaps 6,500 deaths and 6,000 injuries. The Boeing 767 and Boeing 757 that slammed into the WTC were carrying a combined total of about 200,000 pounds of jet fuel, and the combined power of the explosions was about *1,000 tons of TNT*, a kiloton. Those explosions were so cataclysmic that they are being measured in units that ordinarily apply only to nuclear explosions!

In just eight years, the terrorists multiplied the power of their weapons 1,000 times.

Explosive Power Employed and Casualties Inflicted In the Two World Trade Center Terrorist Attacks, 1993 and 2001

	World Trade Center <u>Feb. 26, 1993</u>	World Trade Center <u>Sept. 11, 2001</u>
“Weapon” Used	ammonium nitrate in rented van	two airliners loaded with jet fuel
Estimated Explosive Power	1 ton TNT	1,000 tons TNT
Persons Dead	6	6,500 (estimated)
Persons Injured	>1,000	>6,000 (estimated)

The chart confirms the warning of security expert Stefan H. Leader who wrote in 1997 that terrorists, particularly Islamic extremists, were becoming more and more deadly. He said:

“For many years, . . . most international terrorists wanted a lot of people watching – not a lot of people dead. They wanted publicity for their causes and used hijackings and bombings to manipulate the American political system and other target governments to further their various agendas.

“Evidence increasingly suggests that religiously motivated terrorists are much less interested in drawing attention to themselves and their cause and more interested in punishing adversaries by killing large numbers of people. Many recent incidents underlie this trend.
. . .

“More and more terrorists are motivated by apocalyptic religious beliefs or ethnic zeal rather than political calculus. Zealots, to the extent that they believe violence is sanctioned by God, are especially dangerous. To a greater degree than in the past, religiously motivated terrorists seek revenge against the United States and against ‘the West’ in general. Islamic extremist groups are especially noteworthy in this regard. . . .”

The warnings that were issued over the years have now been confirmed by near-nuclear explosions. And, we are being warned once again that worse carnage awaits us if we do not reverse the trend of terrorist power. That is why we are warring against terrorism.

Written by Lincoln Oliphant, 224-2946

Sources: Numbers for casualties are taken from published sources; estimates for the WTC-2001 attack are preliminary and will change, perhaps much. The 3-paragraph quotation and estimate of explosive power for the WTC-1993 attack are from S. Leader, “The Rise of Terrorism,” 4 *Security Management Journal* 34 (April, 1997). The estimate for the explosive power in the September 11 attack is by Steven M. Block, Professor of Applied Physics at Stanford University, quoted in K. Davison, “Nuclear terror team on standby,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Sept. 16, 2001. Prof. Block calculated the approximate chemical energy and kinetic energy released when the airliners slammed into the buildings. He says there are problems in comparing those explosions with nuclear explosions or other explosions,

but comparing the amount of energy released is valid.